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By Hugo Martín, Times Staff Writer

A college professor became the first African American to serve on the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors when he was appointed as an interim member Tuesday, filling a vacancy created when Gerald "Jerry" Eaves was forced to resign after pleading guilty to corruption charges.

Choosing from among 14 applicants, supervisors unanimously appointed Clifford O'Dell Young Jr., a professor of public administration and executive assistant to the president of Cal State San Bernardino. He will hold the post until a supervisor is picked by voters either in the March or November elections, depending on whether or not a runoff is necessary. Young vowed not to seek the elected post.

During deliberation, Board Chairman Dennis Hansberger said he wanted to improve the ethnic and gender mix of the board, noting that the supervisors were recently described by a local newspaper columnist as "five white guys."

The board took the first step to that end last month when it appointed Patti Aguiar to fill the post vacated when her husband, former Supervisor Fred Aguiar, resigned to join the Cabinet of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Hansberger said later that several of Young's friends and colleagues praise him as a man of high integrity.

He said he supported Young primarily because he hoped Young would help rebuild the damage Eaves' criminal conviction has had on the county's reputation.

"The integrity of this board has been faulted and tested in the past," Hansberger said after Young was sworn into office.

Eaves pleaded guilty Jan. 21 to a felony charge of conspiracy for failing to report free Las Vegas vacations he received from a businessman who was seeking county approval for a billboard project. Under a plea agreement, Eaves avoided a jail term but was sentenced to three years' probation and fined \$10,000. The felony conviction barred Eaves from holding his supervisor post.

The 14 candidates who applied for the \$91,594-a-year position included several city council members and school board trustees from Fontana, San Bernardino, Colton, Bloomington and Rialto.

Applicants also included the publisher of a community newspaper and a gadfly who has

been arrested repeatedly for disrupting board meetings.

Several of the applicants who presented their qualifications Tuesday touched on the Eaves conviction. Eaves was the highest-ranking county official to be convicted in a series of county corruption scandals over the past five years.

Josie Gonzales, a Fontana council member, told the board, "I'd like to join the effort to improve the integrity of the county."

After he was selected, Young said he would try to "be myself" and "do nothing that I wouldn't want to read on the front page of the newspapers the next day."

Young, an ordained minister, holds a doctorate and master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California, and was a professor in CSUSB's Department of Public Administration, College of Business and Public Administration from 1989 to 1999.

He is also a delegate to the California Republican Party and a former deputy director in the U.S. Department of Commerce in the Reagan administration. Young will represent a district that is heavily Democratic and includes the county's highest percentage of Latinos and African Americans. But Young said his party affiliation won't play a role in how he represents the district.

He said the county's biggest challenges are its budget and the ongoing questions about how to plan for development. He described himself as a pro-growth advocate who hopes development can spur job growth.

Two of the applicants for the interim position — Gonzales and former Eaves chief of staff Martin Valdez — are candidates in the March 2 primary. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the votes, the supervisor will be elected in a November runoff between the two top vote-getters.

Supervisors Aguiar, Paul Biane and Bill Postmous said they did not consider Gonzales and Valdez for the post because they didn't want to give them an advantage in the election.